



Festival of Lights at the Mission Inn in Riverside, CA

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SEVEN PLACES TO VIEW CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN DECEMBER

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Today, most American cities have one or more neighborhoods that provide residents with a dazzling light display in December.

But did you know the tradition was born in Southern California?

It all started on Santa Rosa Avenue in Altadena in 1920, when homeowners began decorating a nearly mile-long stretch of deodar cedar trees with holiday lights. The street was soon dubbed Christmas Tree Lane.

Today, Christmas Tree Lane has lots of competition. Here are seven spots to see Christmas lights displays in December.

LA CRESTA CIRCLE IN HUNTINGTON BEACH

In 2003, families on La Cresta Circle began putting up Christmas lights the day after Thanksgiving. For more than 20 years, the tradition has continued. This is arguably the best residential display in Huntington Beach. And since it's just two miles from the coast, it allows for a very Southern California tradition – a beach afternoon followed by a Christmas lights evening.

FOUNTAIN VALLEY DISPLAYS

Historically, Fountain Valley has been a

regional leader in Christmas lights displays. The tradition continues in 2024 on Stanislaus Street between the I-405 and Ellis Avenue. Another well-known Christmas light area is the neighborhood north of the Brookhurst & Heil intersection, across from the FV Rec Center.

NEWPORT BEACH HARBOR

December 18-22 will be the annual Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade, a tradition that has served as a prototype for similar displays by boat owners at harbors up and down the West Coast. Arrive early to secure your best viewing spot on Balboa Peninsula or Balboa Island! Landlubbers also deck out their homes on Sapphire Avenue on Balboa Island and El Paseo Street on Lido Isle.

SNOOPY HOUSE IN COSTA MESA

Costa Mesa's City Hall transforms into a winter wonderland each December, with nightly photos with Santa, train rides, a Snoopy-themed lights display, carolers and food vendors! Add in a visit to your favorite South Coast Metro shopping mall to round out your Christmas experience!

YALE AVENUE SPARKLEBALLS

A more low-key but no less beautiful display has greeted Fullerton residents, students and visitors each year for more than

a decade, as homeowners use plastic cups and Christmas lights to decorate the trees in the neighborhoods between Fullerton College and Cal State Fullerton.

EAGLE HILLS IN BREA

Many Orange Countians now swear that this neighborhood in Brea is the region's best residential display, considering the ornate creations of Santa's sleds, Nativity scenes, the Grinch that Stole Christmas, Bavarian villages and so much more. On the weekends, it's hard to find a parking space. So, arrive early or choose a weekday evening to take a look!

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS AT THE MISSION INN

If you're willing to travel a bit, you can't beat the Festival of Lights at Riverside's historic Mission Inn hotel. More than 1 million Christmas lights, live reindeer, an outdoor ice-skating rink, music and carriage rides are some of the highlights. Just take the 91 Freeway east and exit on University and follow the signs (and the lights). Or consider taking Metrolink's 91/Perris Valley Line or Inland Empire/Orange County Line to the Riverside Downtown station!

Southern California may not get much snow, but we still live in a holiday wonderland each December!